THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • THURSDAY • SEPTEMBER 18, 2025 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 20 • LATE CITY EDITION

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File photo

Colour photos on EVMs starting with Bihar polls

NEW DELHI: Photos of candidates will be printed in colour on the EVM ballot paper starting with the upcoming Assembly elections in Bihar. The candidate's face will now occupy three-fourths of the photo space on the EVM ballot paper. Additionally, the names, serial numbers of all candidates, and the NOTA option will be printed in larger, bold fonts | PTI | P9

PREPS ON FOR SIR IN K'TAKA | P4

CITY TO GET 110 KM ELEVATED CORRIDOR AT ₹18K CR

MOHAMMED YACOOB @Bengaluru

EVEN while the tunnel road project is under tendering process, the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the big-ticket 110-km elevated corridor has been approved by the technical advisory committee of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). The corridor, running radially across Bengaluru, has been planned at a cost of Rs 18,000 crore, including Rs 3,000 crore for land acquisition.

The DPR is expected to be sent to the state government for approval by September 25, and once okayed, the project is expected to be completed in 25 months. "The government has already given in-principle approval for the project. Once it gives its nod for the DPR, the work will start by December," said BS Prahallad, Director (Technical), Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Ltd (B-SMILE). He confirmed that the corridor will be tolled and built under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. "B-SMILE will, however, not decide the toll," he added.

The corridor will be completely elevated, with provisions for entry and exit at selected points. According to Prahallad, the corridor is an end-to-end solution as it has been planned along arterial roads (major roads).

"We prepared the DPR after studying the city's traffic for one year. We got many ideas while preparing the DPRs and all those ideas have been incorporated," he said. P2

In a first, pvt firm vets NIRF rankings

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

INDIA Rankings 2025 released by the Union education ministry a fortnight ago was vetted by a private consultancy firm—the first such instance since the inception of the prestigious rankings in 2015.

Global consulting firm EY, currently associated with various government projects, was entrusted with the task.

Multiple sources privy to the matter told this newspaper that the decision to rope in EY for double verification of data was taken in the backdrop of an inexplicable surge in rankings by some institutions and the shocking slump registered by a few others.

"It was heartening to note that the firm (EY) endorsed the rankings made by us and did not find even a single error," claimed an official with the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) team.

The rankings were delayed by six weeks this year due to the additional verification process. "Post-Covid, we were releasing the rankings by July and August. It was done in June since 2015 when we commenced the ranking process. Our original plan was to release by mid-July this year. But due to the third-party verification, we were able to release them only by the first week of September," said an official.

NIRF is a part of the National Board of Accreditation, an autonomous body set up in 1994 to evaluate the qualitative competence of the professional courses offered in India.

Parameters checked

The parameters assessed for the rankings are teaching, learning & resources; research and professional practice; graduation outcome; outreach and inclusivity, and perception

FTA with India by year-end: EU

Strategic framework evolved for enhanced ties on trade, security, climate, tech

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

THE European Union set a firm target to conclude its long-pending Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India by the end of 2025 and unveiled a new sweeping strategic framework aimed at expanding the bloc's ties with New Delhi.

The New Strategic EU-India Agenda, adopted through a Joint Communication by the European Commission and the EU's High Representative on Wednesday outlines a broad vision for enhanced cooperation spanning trade, security, climate, technology, and global governance.

"Europe is already India's biggest trading partner, and we are committed to finalising our Free Trade Agreement by the end of the year," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. "Now is the time to focus on reliable partners

Europe is open for business. And we are ready to invest in our shared future with India
— Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission President

and double down on partnerships rooted in shared interests and guided by common values. With our new EU-India strategy, we are taking our relationship to the next level — advancing trade, investment and talent mobility, strengthening joint economic security, and deepening industrial cooperation in defence."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the new agenda, calling it a forward-looking initiative to strengthen bilateral ties. "...Delighted to know about the 'New Strategic EU-India Agenda' adopted today," he posted on X. "India is ready to take the India-EU relationship to the next level. It is our shared commitment, shared goal, and shared responsibility."

The announcement marks a key policy priority for the EU, which comes amid a changing geopolitical landscape of growing push for resilient supply chains and diversified trade partnerships. The Joint Communication talks about untapped potential in trade and investment and sets out measures to reinforce supply chain resilience, enhance cooperation in critical and emerging technologies, and deepen engagement through the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC).

Expanding security, def ties

The strategy significantly advances security and defence ties, proposing a dedicated EU-India Security and Defence Partnership. Areas of focus include maritime security, cyber defence and counterterror. A Security of Information Agreement will be negotiated to facilitate the exchange of classified info

BIRTHDAY BONDING

Narendra Modi holds a child as he tours the Health Kiosks and the PM MITRA Park Pavilion in Dhar (MP) on Wednesday | PTI

SIT resumes op in D'sthala, finds human remains

ENS @Mangaluru

THE Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing alleged mass burials in Dharmasthala village, reportedly recovered human remains at five locations in the forest patches of Banglegudde, near the bathing area of Dharmasthala temple, during a search operation on Wednesday.

Sources said a rope, walking stick, identity card and poison bottle were recovered during the search. This follows a recent video statement by Vittal Gowda, the uncle of Sowjanya — the 17-year-old girl who was raped and murdered in 2012. P4

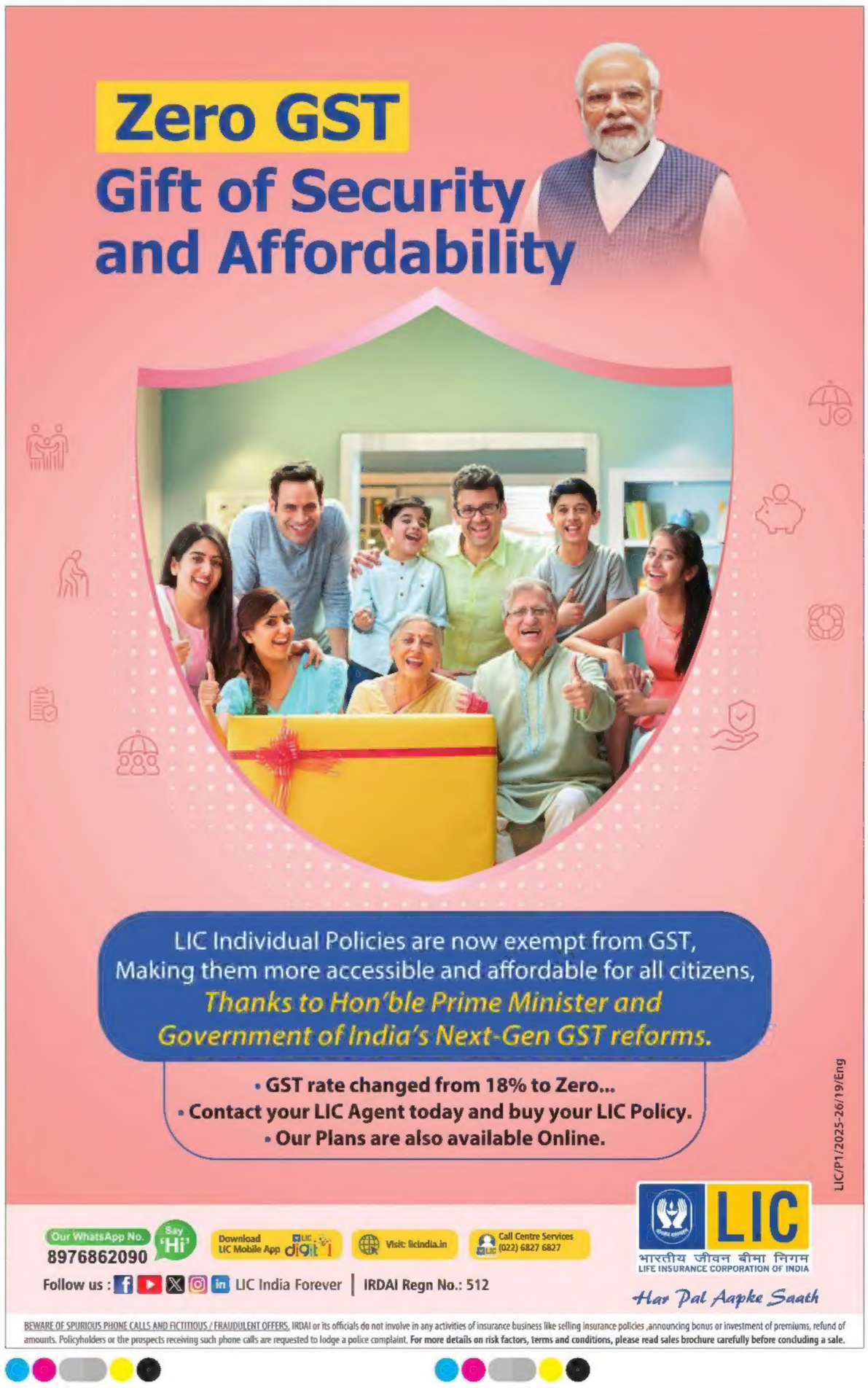
Pak, India to meet again

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Chennai

OH, Pakistan. Nobody does drama like them and Wednesday lived up to expectations. In the afternoon, they were on the verge of forfeiting their must-win encounter against UAE. In the night, they edged past UAE to set up round two against India on Sunday in a Super 4 match.

On a good deck, Pakistan only managed 146, which UAE could not overcome.

At one point, it didn't seem like the match was going ahead. The Pakistan players remained in the hotel as the fall-out over the Andy Pycroft issue rumbled on. PCB relented to play the match after back channel lobbying. P15


Zero GST
Gift of Security and Affordability
LIC Individual Policies are now exempt from GST,
Making them more accessible and affordable for all citizens,
Thanks to Hon'ble Prime Minister and Government of India's Next-Gen GST reforms.
• GST rate changed from 18% to Zero...
• Contact your LIC Agent today and buy your LIC Policy.
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